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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL CONFERENCE.....The Conference will be held January 18-20 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Speakers include Howard Hjort, Director, Economics, Policy Analysis and Budget, and James Webster, Acting Director of Governmental and Public Affairs. The featured speaker will be Civil Service Commissioner Jule Sugarman.

The Conference will cover a wide range of topics including the centralized accounting system, property management information systems, performance evaluation and merit promotion and the Executive Branch reorganization.

DEPUTY SECRETARY WHITE LEAVING USDA.....President Carter has named John White to serve as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. The Committee will meet in January to ratify the President's choice. Mr. White has been Deputy Secretary since March 1977 and, prior to coming to USDA, served as Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of Texas for 26 years.

FLEXITIME IN USDA.....USDA agencies continue to show interest in adopting flexitime and four agencies now have either systems in operation or plans to implement flexitime. In addition, at least one staff office is studying the situation for possible application.

Agency and staff office heads are encouraged to review the concept of flexitime for employees in the Washington Metropolitan Area. All proposed flexitime plans should be sent to the Director of Personnel for approval. (Contact: Verna Deane Brown, OP, ext. 73185)

CHANGES AHEAD FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION.....The New York Times says that President Carter plans to propose legislation next month that would abolish the 95 year old CSC and replace it with two agencies, one of which would be independent of the White House. This legislation would create an Office of Personnel Management for the more than two million Federal employees under the Commission's jurisdiction. In addition, an independent regulatory agency, the Merit System Protection Board would be established. This Board would perform quasijudicial functions now carried out by the CSC.

HONOR AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE.....Nominations for the Distinguished and Superior Service Awards to be presented by the Secretary in May, are due in the Office of Personnel on February 1. Agencies should make every effort to identify employees who have made significant contributions to agency programs. The high quality performance of women, minorities, and persons in support positions should not be overlooked in the selection process. (Contact: Mae Paulsen, OP, ext. 75618)

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM.....The Department employed a total of 618 students under the Cooperative Education Program during fiscal year 1977. Agreements were signed with over 100 colleges and universities throughout the country encompassing 114 duty locations. Several agencies - ARS, FS, FNS, and SCS - exceeded their projections for participation in 1977. The following chart compares the employment of students under cooperative education during fiscal years 1976 and 1977. As the figures indicate, participation in the Program increased significantly in FY 1977.

<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>FY 1976</u>		<u>FY 1977</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Black	33	9	90	44
Spanish-Speaking	15	9	56	17
American Indian	1	1	10	2
Oriental	4	2	8	4
Other	104	63	217	170
TOTAL	<u>157</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>381</u>	<u>237</u>

The Program is an excellent source for expanding employment opportunities in the professional and technical fields to qualified minorities and women, and should be used to obtain high quality personnel to meet current and future needs. All Agencies are urged to review their personnel needs and develop plans to utilize cooperative education as a means to meet those needs during FY 1978. The Department Coordinator and individual Agency coordinators can provide information and assistance on the Program. (Contact: Patricia Killen, OP, ext. 72435)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PERSONNEL PROGRAM.....John W. Deinema, Deputy Chief, Administration, Forest Service has accepted an 18-month assignment with Colorado State University under the Intergovernmental Personnel Program (IPA). Under the assignment, which began January 1, Mr. Deinema will organize, direct, and conduct a graduate study program on resource policy designed to provide young line officers the training necessary to meet the special challenges and solve the problems facing resource managers today. The Program will be based on actual case studies and rely heavily on the practical experience possessed by Mr. Deinema. Through this Program, a better understanding of resource problems will be achieved by the Forest Service and Colorado State University.

The Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 authorizes temporary assignments between Federal Agencies and State and local governments or educational institutions for work of mutual concern and benefit. The Department entered into 164 mobility agreements during fiscal year 1977 and is one of the major Federal users of the IPA Program. (Contact: Patricia Killen, OP, ext. 72435)

PRESIDENT'S POLICY ON PERSONNEL IMPACT OF MANAGERIAL AND REORGANIZATION ACTIONS.....A memorandum dated December 14, 1977, signed by both the Chairman of the CSC and the Director of OMB, announced the President's policy on these actions. The policy provides job protection for employees whose positions are downgraded by reorganization or reclassification. The memorandum emphasizes that this policy applies to reorganizations spearheaded by the President's Reorganization Project and to reorganizations initiated within the Department by officials of this administration. The memorandum goes to state that the policy does not apply to personnel reductions which result from program and budget adjustments, contracting out, offices closing or other reductions for efficiency. (Contact: Ernest E. Toth, OP, ext. 76104)

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT INTERN PROGRAM.....The Presidential Management Intern Program established by Executive Order 12008 on August 24, 1977, is designed to attract to Federal service men and women of exceptional management potential who have received special training in planning and managing public program policies. Under the Program, up to 250 outstanding public management graduates will enter the Federal service each year for 2-year internships. At the end of the 2-year period, agencies can noncompetitively convert the interns to career or career-conditional appointments.

Student nominations for the positions will be obtained by the Civil Service Commission from deans of graduate schools. Nominees will be screened by personal interviews conducted by panels of representatives from Federal agencies, and a pool of applicants will be referred to the Civil Service Commission for selection. Finalists will be referred to Federal agencies for placement between February and April. All interns will be appointed by June 30, 1978.

This Department has tentatively identified 23 positions to be filled under the Program this year. Agencies are urged to review their original commitments and submit, to the Office of Personnel by January 16, 1978, a position description and the organizational and geographical placement showing where each position will be located. (Contact: Ernest E. Toth, OP, ext. 76104)

OMB CIRCULAR NO. A-110 REGULATIONS BECOME EFFECTIVE.....Notice of official adoption of Departmental regulations implementing OMB Circular No. A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations, was published in the Federal Register, December 28, 1977. The Departmental regulations issued as Chapter 5, Title 4, Departmental Administrative Grant and Agreement Regulations, will be printed and distributed within the next 3 weeks. Implementation for Departmental programs subject to the Circular provisions, should be completed by July 30. (Contact: Don Manns, OO, ext. 77527)

CHANGES IN OMB CIRCULAR A-76.....The Department has been digesting the Office of Federal Procurement Policy's proposed changes in OMB Circular A-76 since they first appeared in the Federal Register November 21, 1977.

This new policy statement on government commercial and industrial activities will require that, for "new starts", agencies must contract out when a job cannot be done in house for at least a 25% savings over private sector costs. This policy encourages contracting for new programs. It also protects existing commercial and industrial activities by requiring proof of at least a 10% savings before allowing an existing activity to be contracted out.

As expected, the revisions also include a new factor (for federal retirement and other benefits), to be used in A-76 cost comparison studies. This factor will be raised to 20.4% from the 14.1% established last summer by President Carter.

Agency and Staff office comments on these proposed changes were due January 10, in order to compile a Departmental response to OMB before the January 20 deadline. While most USDA agencies have already commented, additional substantive comments would be appreciated, even if too late to be included in our response to OMB. (Contact: Tom Ward, OBPE, ext. 76111)

DEPARTMENTAL COMPUTER CENTER PERFORMANCE (CALENDAR YEAR 1976 vs. 1977)....

<u>Performance Element</u>	<u>Standard</u>	<u>CY 1976</u>	<u>CY 1977</u>
Jobs processed	N/A	1,396,557	1,791,094
System availability	95%	97%	97%
Jobs not turned around according to standard	less than 3%	3.2%	2.5%
Unscheduled halts requiring system initialization (IPLS and BOOTS)	1/day	0.82/day	0.76/day
Cost per job	N/A	\$14.04	\$10.84

(Contact: E. Stalder, ADS, ext. 74789).

WASHINGTON COMPUTER CENTER RATES.....Effective January 1, the discount rates in WCC were increased from 15 to 25 percent for overnight processing and from 25 to 50 percent for weekend processing. Agencies that use this deferred processing will realize substantial savings in data processing costs. (Contact: Ed Stalder, ADS, ext. 74789)